

Hobbies

Some expert advice on investing in coins

By Roger Boye

Today's column answers questions from Chicago Tribune readers.

Q—We want to invest in rare coins. What types might do best over the long term?

H. F., Chicago

A—Most experts advise buying coins in popular series, such as U. S. silver dollars or commemorative half dollars. Also, remember that coins in the top condition categories have recorded the best price gains in the past two decades. Finally, if you lack grading expertise, buy coins encased in hard plastic with their conditions certified by a reputable service such as the Professional Coin Grading Service or Numismatic Guaranty Corporation.

Q—The serial number on a \$1 bill I have reads B44447494G. Is it special?

N. B., Worth

A—It might retail for about \$7.50 if in uncirculated condition, according to a widely used hobby catalogue. Bills with seven of eight digits the same might re-

tail for \$10 in uncirculated condition and all eight digits the same, \$125.

Q—During our spring cleaning we found several old "Red Books," the earliest being from 1961 (the 14th edition). Do they have any value?

V. C., Chicago

A—Possibly. An unused specimen of the 1961 "A Guide Book of United States Coins" by R. S. Yeoman retails for about \$7.50. More recent editions of the hobby's most popular reference usually sell for less than \$7.50,

with the price depending on cover date and condition. Worn copies have little market value.

A "Red Book" from the late 1940s or early 1950s (editions 1 thru 5) are prized collectibles, usually worth at least \$100 each if in "mint condition" or nearly so.

Questions about coins or paper money? Send your queries to Roger Boye, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a personal reply.